ALAN MOORE

J.H. WILLIAMS III

MICK GRAY

TODD KLEIN

PROMETHEA™

IN MISTY MAGIC LAND™

AMERICA'S BEST COMICS™

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ALAN MOORE
WRITER
J.H. WILLIAMS III
PENCILLER
MICK GRAY
INKER
WILDSTORM FX
COLORS
TODD KLEIN
LETTERS
ERIC DESANTIS
ASST. EDITOR
SCOTT DUNBIER
EDITOR
PROMETHEA
CREATED BY
MOORE & WILLIAMS III
OUTH TOWER HOSPITAL, NEW YORK, 1999 AD:
DOCTOR?
HOW IS HE?
HOW'S MARV?
I'M SORRY. IT'S STILL TOO EARLY TO SAY. YOUR FRIEND TOOK THREE OF THE PAINTED DOLL'S HOLLOW-POINTS IN HIS CHEST. HE'S CRITICAL...
THIS IS YOUR FAULT, KENNETH! YOU SHOULD HAVE PREDICTED WHAT THE DOLL WOULD DO!
ROGER, LEAVE IT...
KEEP OUT OF THIS, BOB!
YOU'RE LEADER, I'M THE MUSCLE, STAN'S THE MECHANIC, MARV'S THE GENIUS, AND KENNETH IS SUPPOSED TO BE OUR PSYCHIC!
KEN, BUDDY, I GOTTA SAY, MAYBE ROGER'S RIGHT. MAYBE YOU'RE LOSIN' IT...
N-NO. I'M SENSING STUFF RIGHT NOW...
SOMETHING...
SOMETHING'S COMING.

PROMETHEA
WHO IN HELL IS THAT?
I--I DON'T KNOW.
SHE LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF SCIENCE HEROINE. MAYBE SHE'S FROM OUT OF TOWN...
UH...HAVEN'T I... THAT IS, DIDN'T WE MEET YOU SOMEWHERE ALREADY?
I DOUBT IT. PLEASE EXCUSE ME, BUT I'M HERE TO VISIT A SICK FRIEND.

HMMPH.
WELL, REALLY.
UH, EXCUSE ME, MISS? WERE YOU LOOKING FOR...?
...UH...
WHAT IN HELL...?
LISTEN, YOU BETTER BACK OFF! I GOT ORDERS THIS PATIENT GETS NO VISITORS...
HARRY, IT'S ALL RIGHT. I WAS HERE WHEN THIS LADY BROUGHT THE PATIENT IN EARLIER.
JUST LET HER THROUGH, OKAY?

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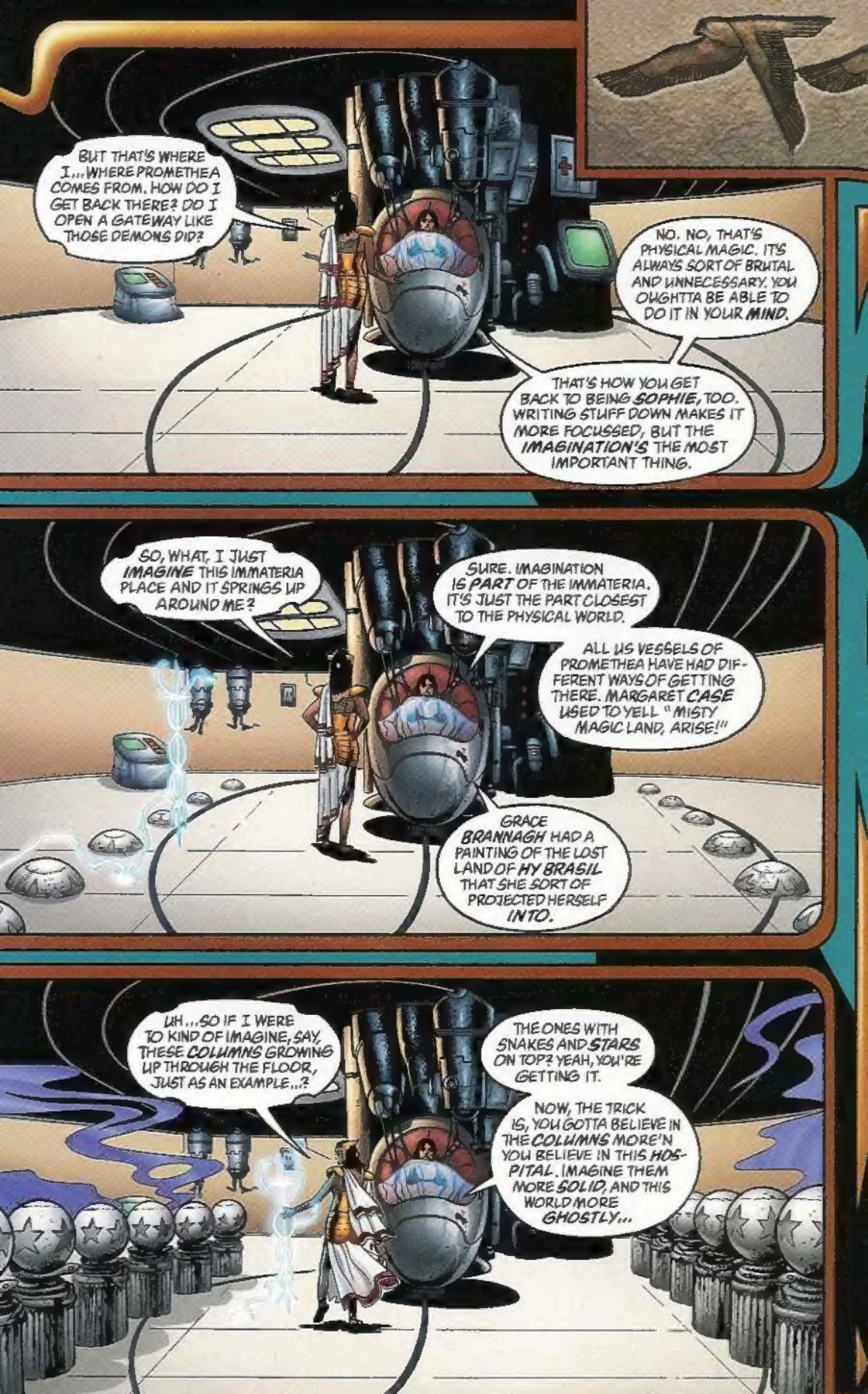
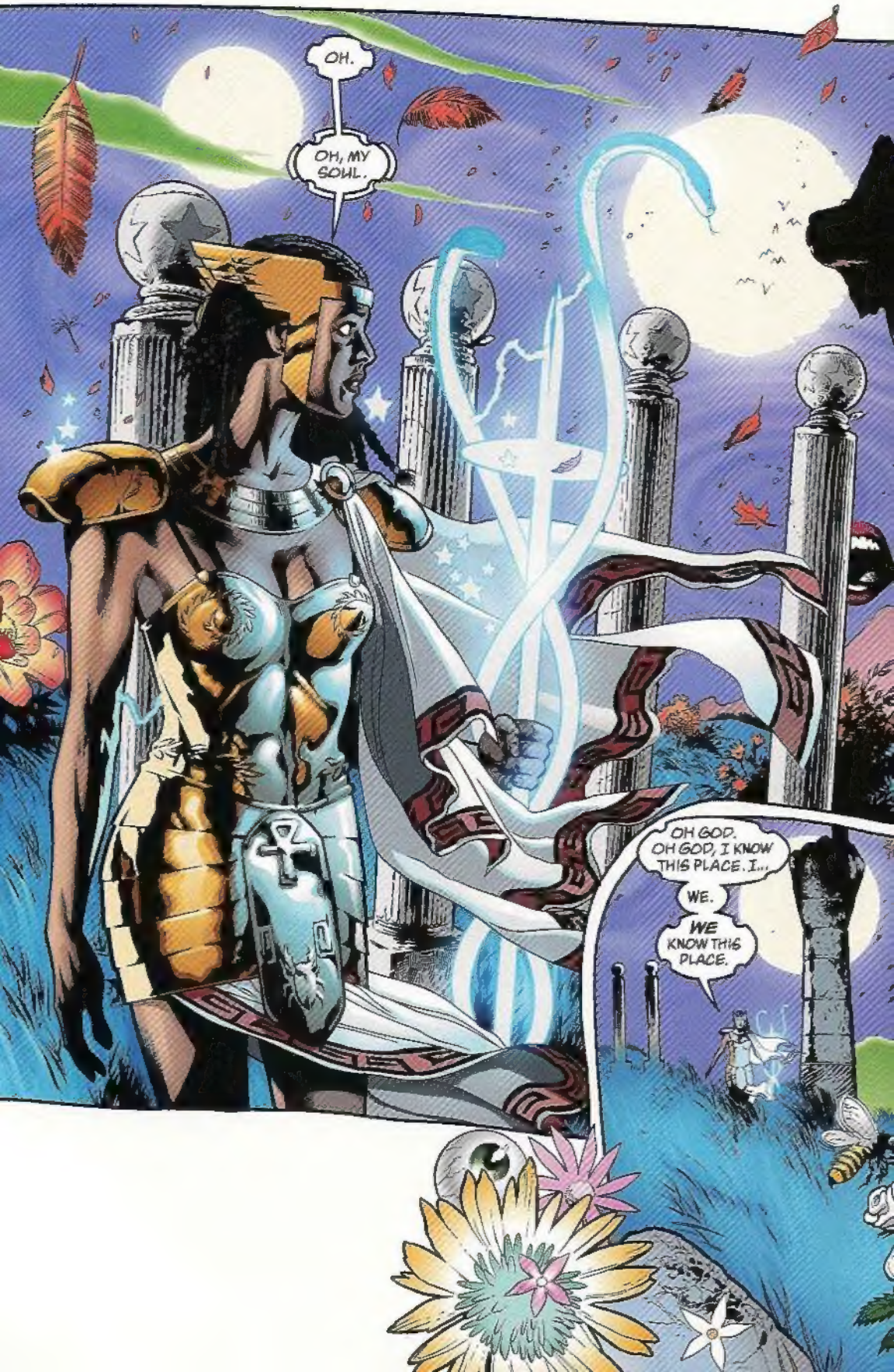
HI.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? CAN YOU TALK?
YEAH. YEAH, I'M OKAY. THEY'RE FIXIN' ME UP WITH THAT CLONEMEAT STUFF.
HUH. Y'KNOW, IT'S FUNNY, SEEIN' YOU BEIN' PROMETHEA INSTEAD OF ME.
I'M NOT FINDING IT VERY FUNNY.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO REVERT TO SOPHIE, AND THESE TWO THINGS THE GOETIA ATTACKED ME, AND NOW MY FRIEND STACIA'S GONE, AND...
WHOAH. DID YOU SAY GOETIA?
YES. THEIR NAMES WERE ANDRAS AND MARCHOSIAS. THEY SAID THAT GOETIA MEANT "HOWLING."
DEAR GOD. SOMEONE MUST BE REAL PISSED AT YOU, GIRL.
HOW'D YOU BANISH 'EM?
LEMME GUESS... YOU USED THE PENTAGRAM, RIGHT?

THE FIVE-POINTED STAR? Y-YES. I JUST SEEMED TO KNOW WHAT WAS NEEDED.
PROMETHEA KNEW. YOU'LL FIND HER AND SOPHIE'S PERSONALITIES FLICKERING BACK AND FORTH AT FIRST.
JUST TRY NOT TO GO NUTS, OKAY?
YES, BUT HOW DO I STOP BEING PROMETHEA? AND WHAT ABOUT SOPHIE'S FRIEND STACIA? SHE JUST GOT SUCKED INTO NOWHERE...
WAIT A MINUTE, WHAT'S THIS? YOU'RE SAYING SOME... CIVILIAN...GOT INVOLVED?
WHERE'D THIS FIGHT HAPPEN?
AT A ROCK CONCERT. THE DEMONS OPENED THIS GATEWAY TO ESCAPE THROUGH. STACIA...SOPHIE'S FRIEND... WAS SUCKED THROUGH AFTER THEM.
OH JEEZ. LISTEN, THIS IS VERY BAD. YOUR FRIEND...SOPHIE'S FRIEND...IS IN THE IMMATERIA.
POLICE
SHE'S IN MISTY MAGIC LAND.
Weeping Gorilla Comix
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY FIRED ME!

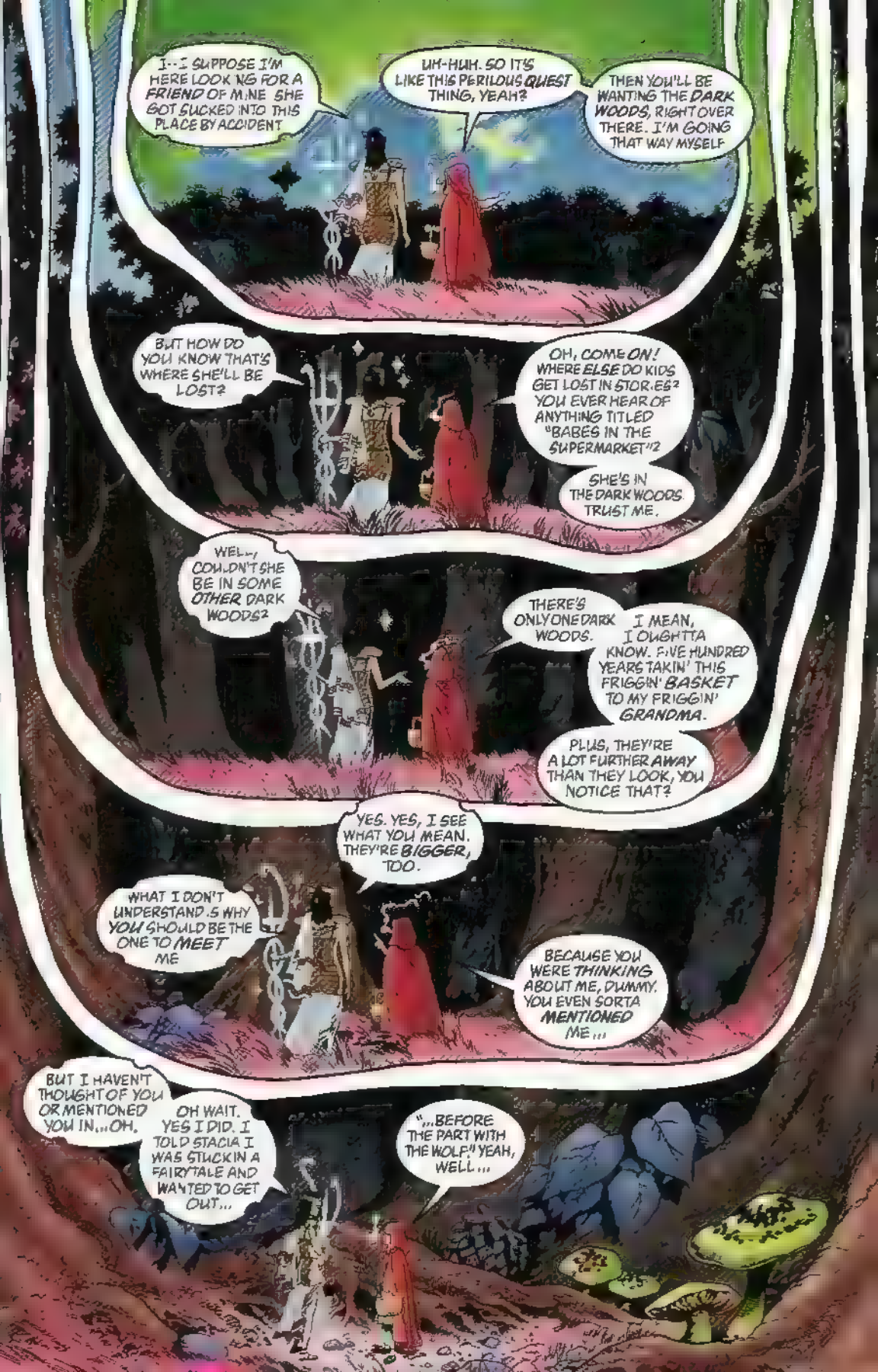

BUT THAT'S WHERE I...WHERE PROMETHEA COMES FROM. HOW DO I GET BACK THERE? DO I OPEN A GATEWAY LIKE THOSE DEMONS DID?
NO. NO, THAT'S PHYSICAL MAGIC. IT'S ALWAYS SORT OF BRUTAL AND UNNECESSARY. YOU OUGHTTA BE ABLE TO DO IT IN YOUR MIND.
THAT'S HOW YOU GET BACK TO BEING SOPHIE, TOO. WRITING STUFF DOWN MAKES IT MORE FOCUSSED, BUT THE IMAGINATION'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.
SO, WHAT, I JUST IMAGINE THIS IMMATERIA PLACE AND IT SPRINGS UP AROUND ME?
SURE. IMAGINATION IS PART OF THE IMMATERIA. IT'S JUST THE PART CLOSEST TO THE PHYSICAL WORLD.
ALL US VESSELS OF PROMETHEA HAVE HAD DIFFERENT WAYS OF GETTING THERE. MARGARET CASE USED TO YELL "MISTY MAGIC LAND, ARISE!"
GRACE BRANNAGH HAD A PAINTING OF THE LOST LAND OF HY BRASIL THAT SHE SORT OF PROJECTED HERSELF INTO.
UH...SO IF I WERE TO KIND OF IMAGINE, SAY, THESE COLUMNS GROWING UP THROUGH THE FLOOR, JUST AS AN EXAMPLE...?
THE ONES WITH SNAKES AND STARS ON TOP? YEAH, YOU'RE GETTING IT.
NOW, THE TRICK IS, YOU GOTTA BELIEVE IN THE COLUMNS MORE'N YOU BELIEVE IN THIS HOSPITAL. IMAGINE THEM MORE SOLID, AND THIS WORLD MORE GHOSTLY...

BARBARA? BARBARA, YOU'RE FADING AWAY...
GOOD. YOU ARE, TOO. THAT'S WHAT'S SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN.
SEE, AS PROMETHEA, YOU'RE MADE OF IMAGINATION. THAT'S WHY YOU CAN MAKE THIS JOURNEY BODILY. YOU ARE WHERE YOU THINK YOU ARE.
NOW SOPHIE, SHE'S FLESH AND BLOOD. SHE COULD ONLY VISIT THE IMMATERIA IN HER MIND.
BUT I... I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS PLACE. I NEED YOU TO EXPLAIN IT TO ME.
CAN'T YOU STAY WITH ME, BARBARA?
BARBARA?
BARBARA, WHERE AM I? I'M...


OH.
OH, MY SOUL.
OH GOD. OH GOD, I KNOW THIS PLACE. I...
WE.
WE KNOW THIS PLACE.

Misty Magicland
IT'S... IT'S LIKE A RECURRING DREAM THAT I... THAT SOPHIE HAD WHEN SHE WAS, LIKE, NINE OR SOMETHING.
OR... OR MAYBE SHE JUST DREAMED SHE HAD THAT DREAM, OR SHE DREAMED IT ONCE, BUT IN THE DREAM SHE REMEMBERED DREAMING IT BEFORE...
OR...
HEY! HEY, YOU!
STAY FOCUSED, YOU STUPID BITCH!
YOU'RE LOSING IT, AND IF YOU LOSE IT HERE...

...WELL, THEN YOU'VE REALLY LOST IT.
HELL, YOU COULD EVEN GO CRAZY
KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'?
OH GOD ARE YOU...?
I--I MEAN, YOU'RE...
YEAH, YEAH, YEAH GET OVER IT, OKAY? YOU'RE IN MISTY MAGIC LAND NOW, AND YOU GOTTA HANG ON TO YOUR CLARITY.
YOU WERE LOSIN' IT BACK THERE.
MARLOE
B-BUT... I MEAN, YOU'RE EXACTLY THE WAY I IMAGINED YOU
WELL, DUH!
LISTEN, YOU'RE HERE LOOKING FOR SOMETHIN', RIGHT? SO, DO YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU, OR YOU JUST WANNA STAND ROUND HERE ALL DAY?


I--I SUPPOSE I'M HERE LOOKING FOR A FRIEND OF MINE. SHE GOT SUCKED INTO THIS PLACE BY ACCIDENT.
UH-HUH. SO IT'S LIKE THIS PERILOUS QUEST THING, YEAH?
THEN YOU'LL BE WANTING THE DARK WOODS, RIGHT OVER THERE. I'M GOING THAT WAY MYSELF.
BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT'S WHERE SHE'LL BE LOST?
OH, COME ON! WHERE ELSE DO KIDS GET LOST IN STORIES? YOU EVER HEAR OF ANYTHING TITLED "BABES IN THE SUPERMARKET"?
SHE'S IN THE DARK WOODS. TRUST ME.
WELL, COULDN'T SHE BE IN SOME OTHER DARK WOODS?
THERE'S ONLY ONE DARK WOODS.
I MEAN, I OUGHTTA KNOW. FIVE HUNDRED YEARS TAKIN' THIS FRIGGIN' BASKET TO MY FRIGGIN' GRANDMA.
PLUS, THEY'RE A LOT FURTHER AWAY THAN THEY LOOK, YOU NOTICE THAT?
YES. YES, I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN. THEY'RE BIGGER, TOO.
WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS WHY YOU SHOULD BE THE ONE TO MEET ME
BECAUSE YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT ME, DUMMY. YOU EVEN SORTA MENTIONED ME...
BUT I HAVEN'T THOUGHT OF YOU OR MENTIONED YOU IN...OH.
OH WAIT. YES I DID. I TOLD STACIA I WAS STUCK IN A FAIRYTALE AND WANTED TO GET OUT...
"...BEFORE THE PART WITH THE WOLF." YEAH, WELL...

...SO MUCH FOR THAT, HUH?
OH GOD! OH GOD, LOOK AT IT! I'M,..I'M FRIGHTENED. WH-WHY AM I SO FRIGHTENED?
BECAUSE YOU'RE FACING THE UNVARNISHED IDEA, WITHOUT ANY ADULT DEFENSES LIKE DISTANCE OR IRONY OR WHATEVER YOU'RE SEEING IT LIKE A CHILD SEES IT.
PLUS IT'S A £$%&ING BIG WOLF. WHAT'S NOT TO BE FRIGHTENED OF?
LITTLE PIGS, LITTLE PIGS, LET ME COME IN!
NOT BY THE £$%&ING HAIR ON YOUR CHINNY £$%ING CHIN-CHIN, YOU £$%&ER!

HO-HO!
WHY, THEN I'LL HUFF...
£$%&! WHERE'S THE SAFETY ON THIS £$%&ING THING?
Y-YOU'VE GOT A GUN! BUT THAT'S..
LISTEN, SOPHIE DREW A DOODLE OF LITTLE...OF YOU, JUST AFTER THIS MOVIE RESERVOIR DOGS CAME OUT.
IT HAD YOU HOLDING A GUN, AND THIS CAPTION SAYING "LET'S GO TO GRANDMA'S!"
HEY, I KNEW THAT! $%&£...
...AND I'LL PUFF...
BUT...I MEAN, THE DOODLE WASN'T REALLY THAT FUNNY, SO SOPHIE THREW IT AWAY...
SHE THREW A PIECE OF PAPER AWAY, MAYBE IDEAS AIN'T THAT EASY TO GET RID OF.
OH, AND INCIDENTALLY, YOU DRAW GUNS LIKE A GIRL. GODDAMN PIECE O'...
...AND I'LL BLOW YOUR HOUSE IN!

AAAAA!
EUGHH...
...DOGBREATH...
$%&£...

UWHUFF...
OW!
£$%&!
OOGHH
HIS HE COMING AFTER US?
NAH. HE KNOWS THE RULES. HE'LL WAIT FOR ME OVER AT GRANDMA'S. I BETTER GO HAUL THE OLD BAT OUT OF HIS DIGESTIVE TRACT. YOU GO FIND YOUR FRIEND.
SHE'LL BE SOMEWHERE NEARBY THESE WOODS GO ON FOREVER, BUT ACTUALLY, THEY AIN'T THAT BIG.
LISTEN, THIS GUN IS CRAP. I GOTTA FIND A KINDLY WOODSMAN WITH AN AXE. YOU TAKE CARE NOW!
I...I WILL
OH GOD AHHHHHHHH :SNIFF:
OH GOD I WISH I WAS DEAD...
STACIA?
IT'S SO SAD. IT'S ALL JUST SO SAD. I...
AHHHH
AHHHHHH HHHHHH..

SHE GETS THE KIDS AND THE HOUSE. I GET THE CAR.
OH GOD, WE'RE ALL SO UNHAPPY. I UNDERSTAND THAT NOW.
PEOPLE ARE IN SO MUCH PAIN. I NEVER KNEW. I NEVER KNEW...
AHUHUH HUHUHUH...
STACIA? STACIA, IT'S ME, SOPHIE
STACIA, THAT PERSON YOU'RE TALKING TO. IT'S WEEPING GORILLA...
I KNOW. AND I UNDERSTAND WHAT HE MEANS NOW. HE ISN'T FUNNY. HE ISN'T F-FUNNY AT ALL.
HE'S US! HE'S US, AND HE CAN'T STOP C-CRYING...
I GUESS PEOPLE CHANGE.
STACIA, LISTEN, HE'S AN IDEA! IT'S JUST THAT YOU'RE EXPERIENCING IT NAKED, AT FULL STRENGTH, WITHOUT ANY EMOTIONAL FILTERS. HE'S A SYMBOL...
YES. HE'S A SYMBOL OF HUMANITY. THAT'S ALL WE ARE, DON'T YOU SEE?
W-WE'RE THE GORILLA THAT WEEPS! AHUHUHUH.
EVERYONE SAID I SHOULD GET WINDOWS '95.

STACIA, HE'S JUST A COMMERCIAL ICON WHO SPOUTS SELF-PITYING CATCHPHRASES! HE ISN'T...H-HE...
OH GOD
OH GOD, THAT POOR MONKEY...
WHY DO PETS HAVE TO DIE?
I LIKE COUNTRY MUSIC. IT TELLS THE TRUTH.
Y-YOU'RE RIGHT, STACIA YOU'RE RIGHT. ALL THOSE GENERATIONS OF PEOPLE, CRUSHED BY THIS TERRIBLE SADNESS...
WHAT'S THE POINT? WHAT'S THE POINT OF ANYTHING?
SOME DAYS ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS.
I--I WANTED TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE, BUT I FAILED. EVERYTHING FAILS. WE'RE ALL SO USELESS...
I JUST WANT TO SIT HERE UNTIL I DIE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU NEED MORE SPACE?
N-NO. NO, I HAVE TO GET UP. I--I KNOW IT'S POINTLESS, BUT...
NOOO! DON'T LEAVE ME! EVERYBODY I EVER LOVED LEFT ME! THEY ALL LEFT ME, THOSE BASTARDS..
THE GARAGE THINKS IT'S THE CLUTCH.
I HAVE... TO BELIEVE... THERE'S HOPE...
I HAVE... TO BELIEVE...THERE'S HAPPINESS...
I HATE MY BODY.

CAN WE HEAR THAT RADIOHEAD TRACK JUST ONCE MORE?
SMACK
COME ON, STACIA! LET'S GET OUT OF HIS RANGE BEFORE HE OVER-WHELMS US AGAIN!
GOD, MY EYES! THEY FEEL RAW. AND MY THROAT. I JUST COULDN'T STOP CRYING...
IF I ONLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT WOMEN WANTED...

THIS IS A PLACE WHERE FICTIONS AND SYMBOLS ARE ALL THAT'S REAL. THEIR INTENSITY IS UNDILUTED.
YEAH. TH-THAT'S PROSCIUTTIA TALKING AGAIN, RIGHT? A MINUTE AGO YOU SOUNDED LIKE SOPHIE
PROMETHEA.
SOPHIE BANGS IS MY NEWEST VESSEL. OUR PSYCHES WILL ALIGN AND SYNCHRONIZE, GIVEN A LITTLE TIME.
HEY, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES ARE REAL BIG RIGHT NOW, WHAT WITH THE MAYOR BEING, LIKE, FORTY DIFFERENT GUYS.
SO, YOU GONNA CLICK YOUR HEELS AND GET US OUT OF HERE?
I FEAR THAT IT IS NOT SO SIMPLE. WHAT SOPHIE MUST DO...
...WHAT I GOTTA DO IS IMAGINE MY WAY BACK TO NEW YORK.
THIS IS AL- SO WEIRD. WHEN I GET HOME, I NEED TO FIND OUT A-L ABOUT PROMETHEA AND WHAT SHE IS.
YOU'LL HELP ME DO THE RESEARCH, HUH, STACIA?
STACIA?

GRANDMA WASN'T HOME.
LEAVE HER ALONE! YOU'RE NOT EVEN A REAL WOLF! YOU'RE JUST A BIG SCARY BLOB OF STUFF TO FRIGHTEN KIDS WITH!
GRRAARRGH!
AAA!
NRRGHH...
ALL THE BETTER TO STOP YOUR HEARTS, MY DEARS...
STACIA, GET UP! WE HAVE TO GET BACK TO OUR REALITY RIGHT AWAY!
OH JEEZ. CAN'T YOU HAIL A CAB OR SOMETHING?
STACIA, I'M SERIOUS! THE STORY ABOUT THE WOLF PROBABLY GOES BACK TO THE STONE AGE.
I--I THINK HE'S OLDER AND STRONGER THAN PROMETHEA WE HAVE TO CONCENTRATE ON NEW YORK...
C-CONCENTRATE? WHILE FLEEING IN TERROR?
WE HAVE TO! JUST SHUT YOUR EYES AND THINK ABOUT NEW YORK. THINK ABOUT THE NOISE AND THE SMELL...
THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME. THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME..
IT'S NOT HAPPENING. ALL I CAN HEAR IS THAT WOLF-THING PANTING BEHIND US!
TRY TO TURN IT INTO THE GROWL OF TRAFFIC OR SOMETHING!
C'MON, STACIA, HELP ME OUT HERE!
UH... OKAY
OKAY, I THINK MAYBE IT'S WORKING...
NO PARK
GOOD! JUST A LITTLE BIT FURTHER.
TRY AND MAKE THE SCENT OF ALL THESE FLOWERS AND BLOSSOMS SMELL LIKE PIZZA AND EXHAUST...
SPARE CHANGE?
OH GOSH! EVERYTHING'S FLOWING LIKE WATER! IT'S LIKE THIS RUSHING CURRENT...
DID I JUST SAY "GOSH"?
DON'T LET GO! WE'RE RIGHT ON THE SHORELINE OF REALITY HERE, AND THE UNDERTOW IS TERRIFIC...
AAA! PRO-LIFEA! I'M SLIPPING!
JUST HOLD TIGHT! HOLD TIGHT", WE'RE ALMOST...

...HOME...
:NNK:
WURRGHH...

W-WE'RE BACK! YOU CAN SLOW DOWN NOW.
NO. I'M NOT COMPLETELY BACK. SOPHIE'S NOT BACK.
I HAVE TO FIND SOMEWHERE AWAY FROM EVERYBODY TO IMAGINE MYSELF BACK INTO HER!
YEAH, WELL, THAT MAKES SENSE! YOU COMPLETELY RULE AND HAVE BOOBS AND TATTOOS AND STUFF, SO YOU WANT TO BE THIS DESPERATE COLLEGE GEEK...
I'M NOT DESPERATE!
STACIA, SHUT UP AND HELP ME THINK ABOUT SOPHIE!
WELL, SHE'S ABOUT FIVE-SIX OR SOMETHING AND LIVES WITH HER MOM, WHO IS THIS TOTAL NYMPHO CALLED TRISH.
I THINK SOPHIE MAYBE GOT LAID ABOUT FOUR TIMES, IF YOU COUNT THAT THING SHE DATED IN HIGH SCHOOL...
RONALD.
GOD, I REMEMBER...
SHE PRETENDS SHE'S HEARD OF BLACK METAL BANDS TO IMPRESS GUYS...
SHE HAS THIS HUGE DISFIGURING MOLE ON HER BUTT. SHE'S GAY...
I AM NOT GAY! GOD, IS MY MOLE REALLY THAT BIG?
YEAH, IT'S IMMENSE. LUCKILY, MOSTLY IT JUST LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE WEARING GIANT VELVET UNDERPANTS.
UH... JEEZ. YOU GOTTA TELL ME THAT DIET. YOU'RE EVAPORATING.
TH-THAT'S SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN, RIGHT? I--I MEAN, ARE YOU OKAY?
PROPANEA?

next~

A FAERIE ROMANCE

IMAGINARY LINES

Write to us at 7910 Ivanhoe Ave., Suite 438, La Jolla, CA 92037, email: promethea@wildstorm.com. All submissions appreciated!

J.H. WILLIAMS III and MICK GRAY
Cover art

WILDSTORM FX
Cover color

TODD KLEIN
Cover logo and design

Dear WildStorm,

Congratulations on the debut of *Promethea*. Like *Tom Strong*, the character and the premise have a lot of potential, and I'm trusting that Alan Moore will not fail to realize that potential to the fullest.

My two favorite moments:

1. The debut of the Barbara-Promethea. What a revelation: a female action hero who isn't ridiculously proportioned, who in fact is overweight! And she's rude, too! ("I'm friggin' Promethea, you idiot!") I hope that we'll get to see more of the Barbara version in the future, through flashbacks.
2. Sophie Bangs' poem. The cross-outs I found particularly charming. This seems to be a variation on the Don Blake-Thor transformation, but it's a wonderfully original twist. No simple banging the floor with a stick to get your superpowers. No, you've got to earn it by showing some genuine creativity!

A couple of fan boy questions:

1. Will the America's Best Comics stories be taking place in "real time"? Or will they exist in the same nebulous continuum that Marvel and DC utilize? I'm just curious, because you've made a point in both *Tom Strong* and *Promethea* of mentioning the year during which the action is taking place. Will these characters enter the new millennium at the same time we readers do?
2. Do these characters exist in the same "universe"? No explicit connection has been made in what's been published so far, except the fact that both titles use super-intelligent simians to comic effect (a tenuous connection, to be sure, and by the way, King Solomon and Tesla Strong as a pair bear a striking resemblance to Art Adams' Monkeyman and O'Brien; is this coincidence?).
3. I don't recall ever seeing J.H. Williams' work before. What has he done?

Anyway, a "good job" to everyone involved in America's Best Comics. Your output thus far has set an interesting stage. I'm looking forward to a brilliant show.

Sincerely,
Jason Powell
West Allis, WI

Thanks for the kind words, Jason. With regard to Barbara/Promethea, we sort of liked her too, and you can rest assured that she'll be turning up in the future, with her next costumed appearance scheduled for issue four. And yes, we firmly believe that the treasures of the imaginary world are more likely to be attained with a ballpoint pen than with a magic walking cane. As for your questions: 1. Yes, America's Best Comics will be trying their best to occur in a loose approximation of real time, but you'll have to forgive us if we lose track occasionally or spend four months detailing a single weekend. We want to have a sense of an ongoing continuum that the readers can visit, but we don't want to make a fetish out of it, which is also pretty much the answer to question 2. We aren't really thinking of the ABC line of titles as a "universe," since the concept of comic book "universes" hasn't really been around in its current obsessive form for more than about 30 years, and the inspirational roots of the ABC characters tend to go back further than that. At the moment, let's just say that there's no reason to assume that Tom Strong, Promethea, or Greyshirt exist in the same world as each other, and indeed, if you consider characters like Jack B. Quick or The First American or even the assembled cast of *Top Ten*, then it's difficult to see how they could possibly be happening in the same reality. On the other hand, there's no reason to assume that these characters aren't existing in the same world, either. Let's just all try to have fun and see what happens. As for 3, J.H. Williams and Mick Gray have previously enthralled the cognoscenti with their work on *Chase*. They also have a lovely *Superman* graphic novel coming out later this year. Personally, we're hoping that J.H. and Mick's dazzling talents will be exclusively gracing the pages of *Promethea* for the foreseeable future, along with some occasional extra special guest shots by such luminaries as Charles Vess, who turns up next issue to document the tragic tale of the 18th century incarnation of Promethea. Who knows? At some point in the future we may even dig up some examples of that legendary P. Craig Russell run that everybody's always talking about.

Dear creators of *Promethea*,

When I first heard that a new comic featuring a female lead character was going to be produced, I was extremely pleased. I was eager to go out and buy it, hoping that it could be successful. It is unfortunate that so few female comics achieve success in the marketplace. That it was to be written by Alan Moore was an added bonus.

In fact, the idea behind the story is a good one. It has a new spin on the "Wonder Woman" type character, and I commend you on that. I wanted to like the story because of this, but from the first few pages, it was difficult to do so. The reason for this was a blatant homophobia that was distasteful and surprising. At first, the homophobia seemed understated. On pages two and three, two different characters say, "My thoughts are all queer." Meaning that their thoughts were somehow wrong. I dismissed this as homophobia at first because the characters were placed in the past, and I know that the word "queer" had a different meaning than it does today. It meant only "odd." Now it is associated with gay and lesbian people and used as an epithet of hatred. But, as I've said, it once had a different meaning. I thought the word choice odd and unfortunate, but I did not think it was homophobic.

Pages 4 and 5 changed my opinion, however. While in the cab, Stacia twice uses homophobic language to insult Sophie Bangs. I know you probably wanted to establish that these two characters are friends, and were engaged in a series of friendly insults. That is probably why you had the characters call each other "fat" and "slut." A case can be made for dismissing the apparent sexism of the word "slut" since the two characters are women. It has been argued that using a word that has been derogatory can be empowering if it is done by members of the group against whom it is used. That is not the case with the words "homo" and "gay," both of which were used as insults. From the text, it appears that neither of these women are lesbians. This is not a case of taking back derogatory language.

You might say that the use of "gay" and "homo" as insults was not meant to be homophobic. It was only a case of adding realism to the banter between two young friends. That may be true. It seems to be acceptable to use gay and lesbian people as a target of ridicule and disdain. This is not acceptable for other minority groups. For example, you don't have the characters using racial slurs in a friendly manner. Although racial slurs are sometimes used in comics, it is usually done to make a character appear unsympathetic, ignorant, or to flag that character as the "bad" one. In fact, in the letter pages, you make just this point about the character Chinky the Chinese imp, calling it "a grotesque and demonic racial caricature, obviously offensive to contemporary audiences." The homophobic slurs, however, were used in an attempt to make the character seem MORE sympathetic, not less. This is a common occurrence in the media, but it is still homophobia and just as offensive to contemporary audiences.

Your use of this "literary device" was disappointing. I hope that you did not do it in order to please your assumed young straight white male readership, to make a female-led comic seem less "girlie." Homophobia and sexism are intimately tied to each other. I have been a fan of comics for over twenty-five years. I am also gay, and a professor of psychology and human sexuality. As a gay man, I have become accustomed to being ignored in comics, in spite of my love for them. I have been pleased at the spattering of gay and lesbian characters that have appeared recently. It is a good thing that we are finally being recognized as a (quite large) audience. In light of this, it really is unacceptable to have such outright homophobia used in a medium which I do respect.

I am not asking you to censor yourselves. If you feel that it is appropriate to use homophobic slurs to make characters more acceptable, then that is your right. I do wish, however, that there could be a more balanced portrayal, some good, some bad, some indifferent. Perhaps Sophie is a lesbian. As it stands, however, it is hard to see the dialogue as little more than another example of using gay and lesbian people as a legitimate object of ridicule and, as such, a legitimate target of hatred.

Sincerely,
Richard Berry

Richard, while Alan shares your feelings about homophobia (and has done so quite publicly and volubly on various occasions in the past), we don't really feel that the charges you present regarding *Promethea* #1 are entirely justified. Frankly, your citing of usage of the word "queer" in the opening pages is a bit of a reach. As you point out the word has had and still does have other meanings totally unrelated to issues of sexuality. Given that, we think you'll agree that it's unlikely that during the opening scene the author intended the readers to understand that a character involved in a murder was distressed because his thoughts were "all homosexual." As for your interpretation

of Sophie and Stacia's dialogue, yes, on one level we wished to establish that the two characters had a friendship that included the trading of friendly insults. This seemed to us realistic. That the terms "gay" (or for that matter "fat") were used as insults was meant to imply, at worst, a typically adolescent thoughtlessness about the issues involved, rather than a hatred or phobia of gay (or fat) people. Also, as you yourself note, there is a case to be made for members of a disempowered group "reclaiming" a word for use amongst themselves. (You must certainly be aware of the rather wearying and divisive in-fighting amongst certain parts of the gay community about whether the term "gay" or "queer" is the preferred label.) There is also the surely-not-unknown phenomenon of individuals who may themselves be reluctant to face their own homosexual inclinations throwing up a smokescreen of jokey (or outright hostile) anti-gay comments. In light of this, we wonder how you surmise from the text, by which you presumably mean the words and pictures taken as a whole, that neither Sophie nor Stacia is gay? How exactly would we have contrived to make the characters appear gay? A flat-top haircut and a k.d. lang album under one arm? Or would that have been stereotypical and lazy? As for the idea that we might be attempting to boost sales amongst our "assumed young straight white(?) male readership" by having one girl refer to another as "totally gay," I'm afraid that even we aren't that desperate or delusional. Nor do we assume that our mixed-race, mixed-gender, mixed-age, mixed-sexuality audience are that stupid or manipulable. Anyway, we hope you'll stick with *Promethea* long enough to have your questions answered and your fears allayed. In the meantime, let's take a look and see how those young straight white males are doing...

Dear Alan,

I just read *Promethea*, and simply must thank you for producing such an achingly beautiful comic. (With a really good artist, even, who didn't draw one babe! Thank you too, J.H. Williams.) I love your mythic history, and I loved knowing who the various historic characters were: Grace Brannagh being Margaret Brundage, William Woolcott being William Moulton Marston, Margaret Taylor Case (all those early women artists with three names!) being a combo of Grace Gebbie Drayton and Winsor McCay (I mean, most guys in comics don't have a clue that there were women drawing comics in those days!). I even loved that quick reference to poor Hypatia, who was, I believe, skinned alive with clam shells. And Steve saw a connection between Steven Shelley and both Steve Trevor and Mary Shelley, who of course wrote *The Modern Prometheus*. It's so nice to read a comic by someone who knows stuff!

You're so darn feminist and your writing and concepts are just so darn good, and obviously Promethea is what Wonder Woman should be if she hadn't been destroyed by generations of idiots (and idiots who were bad artists and writers, to boot!).

Finally, you've tapped into this fantasy that I didn't even know I had, till I read your comic (and obviously a fantasy that other people have, too), and that's the dream/fantasy/hope of becoming the wonderful mythic creature that you create/write/draw. Tarpe Mills did that with Miss Fury – put herself into the comic as the heroine. Obviously it was her fantasy.

Of course, who I'd really like to be is Sheena.

Your fan,

Trina Robbins

Well, thank you Trina, for the kind words and for giving such an unexpected boost to our first letters forum. Trina, for those of you who know nothing of art, life, or women, is one of the lamentably few females to have a place in the Underground Comix Hall of Fame and is also the author of a number of fine books detailing the history of women as characters and creators in the comic medium, from which Mr. Moore cribbed all of the information about classic female artisans that made him look "so darn feminist." Believe me, I've met him, and in real life he's a very unpleasant man.

Regarding the idea of people's fictional creations sometimes crossing over the blurred borderline into reality, we're not so sure it *is* a fantasy. Examples like turn-of-the-century author and H.P. Lovecraft influence Arthur Machen, who seems to have written the First World War "Angel of Mons" episode into existence, and who claimed to have been approached by characters from his own novel *The Three Impostors*, provide grounds for reasonable doubt. Better watch out for those Sheena fantasies, Trina. Would you really want to be living in a jungle with only one leopard skin bikini in your wardrobe and no comic store for miles? And where did Sheena get her hair done, anyway?

Gods damn it, that was a great comic!

What a beautiful first issue. J.H. Williams III's art was breathtaking and the story he illustrated was just as rich and well conceived. For every interesting piece of information relayed in the artwork, there was just as interesting a bit of minutia in the story.

So far this is my favorite ABC comic. I cannot wait to see more of the new *Promethea*, as well as more of past Prometheas. Will Mrs. Shelley remain in contact with Sophie as a mentor to the mantle of Promethea? Will the wizard who was Promethea's human father make an appearance as a ghostly sage? He did say that they would meet in the "Western Lands," the lands of the dead, perhaps Immateria. And can both females and males become Promethea?

As you can see, I thoroughly enjoyed Promethea and my imagination is racing, thinking of more stories in the absence of printed ones. Keep up the excellent work. I am eager for the next issue.

Dan Membiela

Well, as we remarked earlier, we certainly haven't seen the last of Barbara Shelley. As for Promethea's father and the Western Lands, the Egyptians regarded the Western Lands as the Land of the Dead, the kingdom of Osiris that lay beyond the sunset. On the other hand, the lost continent of Hy Brasil was also regarded as a Western land, or, by the ancient Celts, as a close cousin to Fairyland. So who knows? Incidentally, Dan, you may have noticed that we've cut about four lines from your letter. This, we admit, was a straightforward act of brutal censorship. Basically, you'd been far too clever for your own good and were accurately predicting storylines that we won't get to for another four or five issues. So, award yourself a slap on the back for insight, and if you have any more ideas then for God's sake keep them to yourself.

Hello mythic ones.

I just read *Promethea* #1 and all I can say is WOW! The concept, though seemingly familiar, is outstanding. I especially like the little nod to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or *The Modern Prometheus*. Very nice. That's one of my favorite books and I think the most underrated of the 19th century. J.H.'s pencils were accurate, detailed enough without cluttering the page, and just plain nice to look at. Mick, as always, does a world of wonders with his beautiful inks. To all the rest: Great job. Looking forward to next issue with slavering mind jaws. Oh yeah, can I have directions to Moore's House of Magic?

H.J. Courtemanche

Lowell, MA

We have a chilling suspicion that we may all already be there, H.J. To be honest, we were hoping that somebody might have the directions to find the way out. Obviously, our next correspondent feels pretty much the same way.

Dear Mister Alan Moore,

I don't like you in my reality. You make it very hard for me to stay in my reality and not be sucked into yours.

With *V*, you created a web of a frightening reality that was much too different from mine to make me rationally doubt its fictional qualities. You also made it much too vivid for my rational side to subvert the imagination and intuitive realm of my psyche which reveled in this new reality. You made Supreme's hands hold the comic I held in my hands, reading at the same time the page I read. You created a story with Supreme that formulated your own brief history of time, without beginning and without end, a whimper and a bang entwined like an irrational amalgamation of thought and reality, of energy and matter.

And now, finally, in Promethea you give us another pagan creation to marvel at. *Promethea* threatens again my reality by forcing me to read an essay of facts (?) in your reality, in your creation, and making them too vivid and too real. Again you douse gas on the flames of my Christian sensibilities, on my mind's insistence on a rational, absolute, reasonable, and orderly universe. Instead, I feel the attractive pull to this reality where stories are immortal, where my rational, reasonable, absolute, timeless, and beloved radiant, heavenly city is replaced by your pagan creation. Nice.

I don't like you in my reality. Get out.

But keep the books coming.

Jake Aguirre

Jake, believe us, we know how you feel. The problem is that Mister Alan Moore apparently believes that this is all his reality, and that you, me, and everybody else are just fictional creations that he's writing about. We know it sounds crazy, but he's convinced that we're all just patterns of words on his processor and that if he were to stop thinking about us for a moment then we'd all just vanish right in the middle of Greetings to everyone in Moore's House of Magic,

Promethea is wonderful with lots of exclamation points.

Usually it takes two or three issues for a new superhero to develop a life of her/his own, but you have succeeded in making Promethea feel like a very old acquaintance. Also, it's nice to know that people who read too much poetry have as good a chance of becoming superheroes as those who hang around nuclear research facilities.

Will Sophie get to keep her new personality as long as she wants it, or will she have to fight Promethea wannabes?

McCamy Taylor

Thank you, McCamy. Sophie will keep her new personality for as long as she can imagine it. And yes, poetry is more likely to transform you into a remarkable being than radiation. Also, poetry doesn't take millions of years to decay. But, on the other hand, it will make your hair fall out. Anyway, that's more or less all we have room for this issue. Be back here in a month's time when we visit a library with Sophie and see her conduct a cataclysmic battle very quietly, and also learn more about the affairs of the poet Charlton Bennett as seen through the fine eye of the legendary Charles Vess in "A Faerie Romance." Until then, be careful what you're writing, but write anyway.